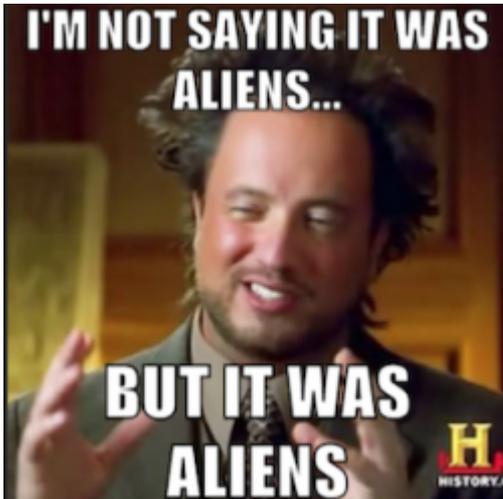


Is Cancer Simply Karma? University of Texas Scientists Might Think So



By Alex Berezow — February 7, 2018



One of the many problems with academia is that it allows nutcases to flourish.

Consider [Columbia University](#) [1]. It employs both Dr. Oz, "America's Quack," and Mark Bittman, a former organic food warrior for the *New York Times* who was once described as a "[scourge on science](#) [2]." UC-Berkeley has Joel Moskowitz on staff, a "[wi-fi truther](#) [3]" who thinks that cell phones and wi-fi are killing you and your children. The university is also home to Peter Duesberg, an [HIV denier](#) [4].

This list could go on and on. People who are legitimate threats to scientific progress and public health often can find a cozy niche in academia.

The latest kooks to grab the spotlight are Varsha Gandhi and Sen Pathak of the MD Anderson Cancer Center at the University of Texas. According to [New Indian Express](#) [5], Dr Gandhi and Dr Pathak are helping organize a conference in India on cancer prevention. The featured speaker is [Baba Ramdev](#) [6], a Hindu yoga guru and proponent of ayurvedic medicine, a type of pseudoscience.

Ramdev's greatest hits include his belief that [yoga can "cure" homosexuality](#) [7] and that cancer is divine retribution for sins committed in a previous life.

Where's the Outrage Among Scientists and Science Journalists?

This outrage has received scant press coverage. Ivan Oransky, the purveyor of the respected website Retraction Watch, has [covered the story](#) [8], but hardly anyone else has noticed.

Imagine if scientists from any major American university helped organize a conference based on Christian faith-healing and the featured speaker was televangelist [Pat Robertson](#) [9], who blamed

9/11 on abortion, homosexuality, and feminism. The condemnations would be swift and brutal, and people would be demanding that the university fire the professors for promoting hate speech.

This is one of the truly infuriating aspects of the media. The media has no problem whatsoever hammering and mocking kooky conservatives or Christians who endorse anti-scientific beliefs. But kooky progressives or devotees of other religions always seem to be off limits*.

If (science) journalists were interested in doing their jobs, they would be demanding an explanation from these professors at the University of Texas. But we all know that's not going to happen. Instead, they will continue to focus on getting the [proper balance of gender pronouns in their articles](#) [10].

*Note: ACSH President Hank Campbell and I wrote an entire book about this called [Science Left Behind](#) [11].

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Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2018/02/07/cancer-simply-karma-university-texas-scientists-might-think-so-12538>

Links

[1] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2016/11/30/dr-oz-mark-bittman-and-quacks-columbia-university-10500>

[2] <https://geneticliteracyproject.org/2013/04/15/on-gmos-new-york-times-foodie-mark-bittman-is-a-dark-cloud-in-the-brightening-sky-of-reason/>

[3] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2017/02/28/uc-berkeley-psychologist-joel-moskowitz-cell-phone-wi-fi-truther-10928>

[4] <http://www.dailycal.org/2012/02/22/uc-berkeley-professor-denies-link-between-hiv-and-aids/>

[5] <http://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/chennai/2018/feb/06/sponsor-backs-out-of-iit-madras-cancer-conference-associated-with-baba-ramdev-1769295.html>

[6] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramdev>

[7] <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/india/5780028/Hindu-guru-claims-homosexuality-can-be-cured-by-yoga.html>

[8] <https://twitter.com/ivanoransky/status/960190252328587264>

[9] http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1953778_1953776_1953796,00.html

[10] <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2018/02/i-spent-two-years-trying-to-fix-the-gender-imbalance-in-my-stories/552404/>

[11] <https://www.amazon.com/Science-Left-Behind-Feel-Good-Anti-Scientific/dp/161039321X>